

Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO INVESTIGATE 1955 EMMETT TILL MURDER

Federal-State Partnership To Develop Possible State Law Prosecution

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Department of Justice and the Mississippi District Attorney's office for the 4th District today announced the opening of an investigation into the 1955 murder of Emmett Till, a 14-year old African-American Chicago resident who was kidnaped and murdered in August 1955 while visiting family in Money, Mississippi. The Justice Department announced that it will partner with local law enforcement officials to investigate whether any prosecutions remain possible under state law.

"The Emmett Till case stands at the heart of the American civil rights movement," said R. Alexander Acosta, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "This brutal murder and grotesque miscarriage of justice outraged a nation and helped galvanize support for the modern American civil rights movement. We owe it to Emmett Till, and we owe it to ourselves, to see whether after all these years, some additional measure of justice remains possible."

Recent renewed interest in the matter has suggested the potential that others were involved in the murder. While the five year statute of limitations then in existence on any federal prosecution has expired, prosecution by Mississippi officials remains possible. The murder occurred in Mississippi's 4th Judicial District, covering Leflore, Sunflower and Washington Counties, under the jurisdiction of District Attorney Joyce Chiles. Accordingly, the Justice Department and Chiles have agreed to partner in investigating the matter to determine whether state charges against any other individuals remain viable. Federal attorneys and FBI agents will investigate the matter, in coordination with District Attorney Chiles and local law enforcement. Any resulting discovery of additional criminal conduct will be prosecuted by Chiles in Mississippi state court.

Till was kidnaped and murdered on or about August 28, 1955 by Roy Bryant and his half-brother J.W. Milam. The murder occurred after Till purportedly whistled at Bryant's wife, Carolyn, while shopping at the Bryants' store. Fewer than four weeks after Till's body was pulled from the Tallahatchie River, an all white, all male jury acquitted the two of the murder. They subsequently detailed to a magazine journalist how they beat Till, took him to the river, shot him in the head, tied a large metal fan to his neck with barbed wire, and pushed his body into the river. Milam died in 1980, and Bryant in 1990. No one else was ever indicted or prosecuted for involvement with the kidnaping or murder.

"Our office is pleased that because of cooperation between a Mississippi District Attorney, Joyce Chiles, and the Department of Justice that this long-running nightmare is being investigated," added Jim M. Greenlee, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi. "We are pleased to have helped with this so far and hope that this investigation will shed important light on and possibly bring everyone some closure about Mr. Till's tragic and untimely death."

The Division has previously opened and prosecuted similar civil rights-related murders. In February 2003, the Division prosecuted and convicted Ernest Henry Avants for aiding and abetting in the 1966 murder of Ben Chester

EXHIBIT B

White, an elderly African-American farm worker in Mississippi. White was lured into a national forest and shot multiple times in an effort to bring the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. to the area, so that he too could be killed. On April 19, 2004, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld Avants' sentence.

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